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Elah, Valley of: I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Arnet, Samuel

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3. Father of Hoshea

Elah was the name of the father of Hoshea (2 Kgs 15:30; 17:1–6), the last king of the northern kingdom of Israel (ca. 729–720 BCE). Elah himself was not king, since Hoshea came to power through a putsch.

4. Son of Caleb

Elah, one of the sons of Caleb, was, according to the Judahite genealogy in 1 Chr 4, the father of Kenaz (v. 15).

5. Son of Uzzi

Elah, son of Uzzi, was a Benjaminite inhabitant of Jerusalem after the return from exile (1 Chr 9:8) and head of a family. The name does not appear in the parallel text in Neh 9.

Isaac Kalimi

Elah, Valley of

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Film

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

The Valley of Elah (Heb. *‘ēmeq hā’ēlā*, lit. “the Valley of the Terebinth” or “the Valley of the Oak”) is the place where the Israelites camped before they met, under Saul’s command, the Philistines in battle, a fight that resulted in David killing Goliath (1 Sam 17:2, 19; cf. 21:9 [MT 21:10]). Josephus does not mention the site, although he relates the story (*Ant.* 6.170). It is commonly identified with modern Wadi es-Sanṭ (lit. “Valley of the Acacia”), about 15 miles southwest of Bethlehem.

Bibliography: ■ Hamilton, J. M., “Elah, Valley of,” *ABD* 2 (New York 1992) 423. ■ Vanzant, M. G., “Elah, Valley of,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 2 (Nashville, Tenn. 2007) 228–29.

Samuel Arnet

II. Film

Many film portrayals of the David and Goliath story do not mention the Valley of Elah or set the encounter in a valley. A few clearly set the David/Goliath confrontation in a valley, though they do not mention it by name. These are *David and Goliath* (dir. R. Potter/F. Baldi, 1961); *The Story of David* (dir. D. L. Rich/A. Segal, 1976); and *The Bible* (dir. M. Burnett/R. Downey, 2013). In *David and Goliath*, Goliath comes over a ridge to face David much below him. In the latter two movies, camera angles situate Saul’s camp “up above” the Philistine army while David lifts Goliath’s head aloft in a long shot down below.

In the film, *In the Valley of Elah* (dir. P. Haggis, 2007), the main character, Hank Deerfield, a be-reaved father, whose soldier son, Mike, disappeared

after returning from a tour of duty in Iraq and was found dead and dismembered, takes on a recalcitrant army establishment, with the help of a female police officer, Emily Sanders, in order to discover the truth about how his son died. The analogy to the David and Goliath story is clear. It is as if the struggle to find the truth about Mike takes place in the Valley of Elah. At one point in the movie, Hank recounts the story of David and Goliath to David, Emily’s son (see Reinhartz).

Bibliography: ■ Reinhartz, A., *Bible and Cinema: An Introduction* (New York, 2013).

Barry Dov Walfish

See also → David and Goliath, Story of

Elam (Person)

1. Son of Shem

Elam (Heb. *‘Ēlām*) is the first of the five sons of Shem according to the Priestly tradition (Gen 10:22; 1 Chr 1:17). In the “table of the nations” in Gen 10, he is the personification of the land situated in present-day Iran (see “Elam, Elamites”). The fact that Elam appears linked to names such as Assur or Aram shows knowledge of relationship in culture and language between the “Semitic” people of the ANE.

Bibliography: ■ Galil, G., “Israelite Exiles in Media: A New Look at ND 2443+,” *VT* 59 (2009) 71–79. ■ Zadok, R., “Israelites, Judeans and Iranians in Mesopotamia and Adjacent Regions,” in *God’s Word for Our World*, FS S. J. De Vries, vol. 2 (ed. J. H. Ellens et al.; JSOTSup 389; London 2004) 98–127.

2. Son of Meshelemiah

Elam is the fifth out of seven sons of Meshelemiah, belonging to the Korahites and the gatekeepers appointed by David (1 Chr 26:3). Such an idea is the invention of the Chronicler and has no parallel in the books of Samuel.

3. Son of Shashak

Elam is a descendant from the tribe of Benjamin, son of Shashak, son of Elpaal, son of Shaharaim and Hushim when they were in Moab (1 Chr 8:24). The historical context of these Benjaminites has sometimes been linked to the premonarchical period (Japhet: 195), but a Persian period setting (see “Elam (Person) 4. Ancestor of Returnees from Exile”) is preferable.

Bibliography: ■ Japhet, S., *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL 24; Louisville, Ky. 1993).

4. Ancestor of Returnees from Exile

Elam is the name of the ancestor of 1,254 people who returned from exile to Jerusalem along with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:7; Neh 7:12; 1 Esd 5:12) while